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The President's Daily Brief

August 18, 1975

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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

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PORTUGAL

The Communists yesterday vowed to continue their campaign in the north to reassert the party's presence there. Their initial foray into the north, a party rally on Saturday in the town of Alcobaca, proved that the anti-Communists are equally determined to be rid of them.

The Communists, now experiencing the same type of harassment faced by the more conservative parties several months ago, are demanding that the military guarantee the right of free assembly. They have scheduled another demonstration tomorrow in Porto, claiming they have sufficient power to respond and "smash the counterrevolutionaries." Anti-Communists around Porto are certain to react to this second challenge, and more violence may result since the Communists have promised to "take precautions" against a repetition of events in Alcobaca.

Pro-Communist Prime Minister Goncalves, under heavy pressure to resign, publicly admitted on Saturday that his new government is unable to function because of the split in the armed forces. Goncalves promised, however, that he and his left-wing cabinet would not "shirk their responsibilities." The statement will do little to gain support for Goncalves, but it does make clear to those opposing him that he will not step down voluntarily.

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The dissident officers in the Armed Forces Movement are continuing to circulate the anti-regime document drafted by former foreign minister Antunes, hoping to gauge support among the rank and file before moving against Goncalves. [REDACTED]

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The dissidents are clearly hesitant to move against their fellow officers and may lose their advantage if they continue to delay. The Socialists and other anti-Communist civilian groups, however, can be expected to continue pressuring them, particularly if the Communist counteroffensive in the north continues.

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PORTUGUESE TIMOR

Indonesian President Suharto again has postponed a decision on taking military action against Portuguese Timor. He has scheduled a meeting this morning with high-level cabinet and security officials, however, to review the situation.

Suharto continues to fear an adverse reaction from Washington if he authorizes an invasion, particularly since such a move would come only a few weeks after his visit here. Top military commanders, however, still favor swift military action because they fear the situation in Timor will soon turn irrevocably against pro-Jakarta elements and result in a threat to Indonesian security.

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NOTES

Bangladesh remained quiet during the weekend, and the round-the-clock curfew imposed on Friday has been partially lifted.

Pakistan, which on Friday became the first country to recognize the new regime, has promised to send rice and other supplies. It has urged other Islamic countries to extend recognition, and Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Sudan did so over the weekend. The new President, Khondakar Mushtaque Ahmed, has declared that his government wants friendly ties with all three major powers. Meanwhile, India has continued its cautious approach to the new regime. An official Indian statement yesterday described the situation as an "internal matter of Bangladesh" that India is "carefully studying." Moscow also appears to be adopting a wait-and-see attitude. Peking has reported the coup, but as yet has not commented.

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The Lao communists are moving to take full control of Vientiane.

Several thousand communist-led civilian demonstrators staged peaceful protest marches in two of Vientiane's outlying districts over the weekend. The marchers were accompanied by armed communist troops and cadre. The demonstrators are demanding the ouster of local non-communist village officials and their replacement by pro-communist sympathizers. The Lao communists almost certainly will follow up their take-over of Vientiane with a similar move in the royal capital of Luang Prabang.

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Pyongyang announced yesterday that a delegation headed by Cambodian communist leader Khieu Samphan and Prince Sihanouk's Peking-based prime minister, Penn Nouth, will soon pay an "official goodwill visit" to North Korea at the invitation of the North Korean government.

The visit will provide an opportunity for Sihanouk, who has been in Pyongyang since the middle of May, to discuss the question of his possible return to Cambodia with Samphan and deputy prime minister Ieng Sary, who may accompany Samphan. The Prince has thus far avoided meeting with the Khmer communist leaders in Peking, reportedly preferring to have Penn Nouth negotiate the terms of his future relationship with the Phnom Penh regime.

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